Nala

*A Case Study*

*Pride Rock Elementary School*

*Hakuna Matata, Pennsylvania*

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**Introduction and Synthesis**

For this case study, I was place at Pride Rock Elementary School in a Kindergarten classroom. Sarabi, my mentor teacher, really made this experience worthwhile. She was great to work with and helped me to better understand how to develop appropriate activities for students. Sarabi paired me with Nala and was extremely flexible with when I sat in her classroom since I was at the school three times a week already. Through observations, interviews, and samples of Nala’s work I was able to create learning opportunities for her that I believed would help her overall personal growth.

I feel it is extremely important for children to feel comfortable with you in order to trust you and work with you. Establish rapport with Nala was really important to me. When I first met Nala, she was very timid. It did not take long for her to warm-up though. Upon meeting her, I introduced myself and tried establishing common ground with her. I wanted Nala to know that she would be heard, so I used every opportunity possible to engage her in conversation and ask her about things she has told me about, like what she planned to do the coming weekend. Hearing and listening are two very different things. Hearing does not necessarily require attention, while listening requires attention and comprehension about what someone is saying. I wanted Nala to be able to connect everything we did to her own life in order to retain the information longer. When you are able to make thing personal, you tend to find them more meaningful. I wanted Nala to get as much out of this experience as possible.

While collecting data and being enmeshed in Nala’s world at school, I tried figuring out how to best build on her skills and get her more engaged in the learning process. Coming up with the big question was the easiest part of the entire process because I had much assistant from my interviews with the teacher and school counselor. I decided that I wanted to run my lessons in more of a small group than one-on-one with Nala. I learned that her learning to work with others and value other was just as important as working individually on building her reading and writing skills. This helped me focus my big question to a broader audience and afforded me many options as the work within the group unfolded. I began to see Nala for who she truly was and I was able to attend to her needs in a way that would truly best help her. I did shape my lessons around the artifacts I gathered and made adaptations as the instruction was unfolding. Overall, it proved to be a positive learning experience that Nala achieved much learning from.

**Observation of Student (Artifact 1)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Time | Observation | Interpretation |
| 10:00 | Sarabi introduces me Nala and tells her that I will be working with her. She gets excited and asks what we will be doing. | She likes feeling special and the attention. |
| 10:05 | Sarabi asks the kids to come to the rug, Nala looks at her and continues talking to Simba | She does not like to listen and follow directions |
| 10:07 | Sarabi needs to ask her to please come to the rug again, Nala runs over | She needs to be told more than once to do something so the attention is on her |
| 10:10 | Sarabi tells them that it is reading time until lunch, Nala raises her hand to pick a book first | Nala likes to be first to choose things even though she does not follow directions too well |
| 10:15 | Picks out a book, finds a place to sit, and begins to read | She knows the type of books she wants and is content reading it |
| 10:20 | Quickly becomes bored with the book and tries to take a book from another student, when she doesn’t get her way she scratches him | She has a problem with behavior and being respectful. She does not like to wait to her turn or share. |
| 10:23 | Nala gets reprimanded by Sarabi for what she did. She just smirks. | Consequences mean nothing to her. |
| 10:30 | Heads to the cafeteria for lunch. Walks down the hall ‘hips and lips’ and on the third tile like she is supposed to | She can follow directions when it’s something she enjoys |
| 10:35 | Gets food and sits with her peers at the table. Eating lunch and taking with peers at her table. | She enjoys talking with her friends |
| 11:05 | Side is dismissed to clean up for lunch. She is not finished on time and is delayed in cleaning up. | Not finished in time due to talking too much. |
| 11:10 | Heads out for recess excited | Has much energy to expel during recess |
| 11:30 | Return to class from recess, grabs a book and begins reading until the teacher returns. | She is now calm, knows what is expected of her, and does what is expected without being told |

**Observation (Artifact 1)**

**Annotations and Connection to Other Artifacts**

Observing Nala was a great way for me to get to know her on other a social and academic level. Nala tends to give the teacher a hard time during instructional time. She does not like to listen to directions the first time they are given. When given the opportunity to work with peers, she always does. Through my observation, I found that Nala enjoyed working with peers because she enjoyed talking with them instead of doing work. Nala seems to have behavioral problems within the classroom. She likes to get what she wants and when she does not, Nala tends to act out. When reading, she is really good at staying engaged if she finds the book interesting. When reading with other students, it turns more into a social experience instead of a reading experience. Nala has an excellent vocabulary and really enjoys writing. She also reads at an advanced reading level. I was able to see that she is able to follow directions and actually enjoys reading, but only after all her energy had been expelled at recess. Her personality makes her very likeable within the classroom community, but it is also something that tends to get her in trouble. Seeing her need to be hands on in order to be engaged as well as her interactions with others helped me to focus my lessons. I knew that as long as I built in games and activities to my lessons, I would have no problem keeping her engaged.

**Interview with Student (Artifact 2)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Question | Answer |
| What do you like best about school? | Nothing, I don’t like school. It’s boring. |
| Really, why do you find school boring? | Because I don’t get to play for long and I don’t like doing work. |
| Do you like anything about school? | Lunch and recess cause then I can talk to my friends and not get in trouble |
| Do you act differently at home than at school? | Mmmm, kind of. I am crazier at home. I get in trouble by Mr. P if I am crazy at school |
| What do you mean by crazier? | I play more outside and am louder. My mom tells me I talk too much. |
| Do you remember the day you scratched that boy in class? What made you do that? | I was mad cause he wouldn’t give me the book I wanted. |
| Do you feel like you should have asked more politely instead of scratching him? | Mmm, I guess I could have made better choices. But I was so mad. |
| What did mommy and daddy say about that? | They told me not to do it again. Then I got to play. |
| Interesting. So do you ever have to read something in class that you don’t like? | Yes. Sometimes when we have to read something I get bored, but when we get to choose then I like to read. |
| What is difficult for you to read? | Some books cause I pick books above my reading level. My teacher has taught us how to sound out words, but sometimes it’s too hard for me. |
| Do you read on your own at home? | Sometimes, but not much |
| Outside of school what kind of reading or writing do you do? | I write some stories about what I do on the weekends. |
| What is your favorite type of book to read on your own? | Dr. Seuss I guess. I like the rhyming. |
| What is your favorite activity or sport? | Soccer and baseball. I am super fast. |
| Oh Wow! I never played soccer but it always looked like fun. Do you ever write about soccer? | Yes, many times I write about soccer and my baseball games. |
| It’s always easy to write about the things you enjoy huh? Well, thank you for talking to me. |  |

**Interview with Student (Artifact 2)**

**Annotations and Connection to Other Artifacts**

This interview was really the breakthrough moment for Nala and I. We established a connection and I got to know her pretty well. It was more than just a question / answer session. She really got the idea that I cared about what she had to say and was truly interested in hearing her. Even though she was timid talking to me at first, I think this made her warm-up to me easier because she could tell I was being genuine. Sometimes you can talk to someone and ask questions without really caring about what they have to say. It was important for me to show Nala that no matter what she says, she will be heard. Learning about Nala first hand helped me to design instruction and feel for confident in my ability to establish rapport with her. Establishing knowledge about Nala and getting a feel for what it would be like to work with her gave me excitement about what the future held.

**Sample Student Work (Artifact 3)**

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**Sample Student Work (Artifact 3)**

**Annotations and Connection to Other Artifacts**

I loved getting copies of Nala’s work because it really showed me how she expresses herself and what she values. Since I wanted to evaluate her reading and writing, it was nice to see how she used her creativity to come up with her own story. These two samples show where she is at with her writing. Where I believe she had some help with some of the words, it still shows that she is advanced when it comes to formulating sentences. The pictures she draws are detailed and colored based upon what she was wearing during that time. It was neat to see how she tried to make things as realistic as possible. Seeing sample of work showed me that it was not a chore for Nala to write about the things she enjoyed doing. It was more fun because she got to share with me her entire store when she was done. She was excited to complete her story and showed me the finished project and I could tell it was something she was truly proud of. Sarabi did a great job encouraging her through this process.

**Interview with Teacher (Artifact 4)**

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| Question | Answer |
| How long have you known Nala as a student? | Almost a year. She was new to our kindergarten class. |
| Did you know Nala before having her as a student? | Yes, we hold a Kindergarten Clinic each May for the incoming class. I met her last May during the Clinic. |
| Was she different that you remember? | At Kindergarten Clinic she seemed very shy, but I felt a connection to her. Even the beginning of this year I thought she was very introverted. When she finally warmed-up though, it was a different story. It was like I gained a completely different kindergartner. |
| Do you think she would be a good student to observe and work with? | Yes, I think she is perfect for you. I have to admit though, she may give you a run for your money but hopefully you can help her become ‘nicer’. |
| Haha. Oh my. Well does she ever seem to struggle in certain subject areas or excel in any? | She seems to struggle in math a little, but that is because she does not like to do the work. Overall, she is a very bright student she just does not like to apply herself. |
| Do you think she finds school boring and that is why she gives you a hard time? | I think she is used to being in charge and in school she doesn’t have that option. She seems bored, but that is because she refuses to become engaged in certain activities. There is only so much I can do to help her without it affecting my other students. |
| How do you think she learns best? | She loves being hands on with things and telling stories. If she can connect something to her life, she seems to enjoy it better and learn better. |
| How does she speak or write in comparison to her peers? | She is pretty advanced for her age when it comes to linguistics. She puts sentences together sometimes that really make me stop and think. Her writing can always improve, but her vocabulary is great for a kindergartner. |
| Would you consider Nala a stronger reader? | Yes, she is one of the strongest in the class. She sometimes helps other children sound out words of a story. |
| Are there any important aspects about how she leans that would be helpful when creating activities? | She would love if you would include some sort of game. She enjoys being active and it would also help to keep her engaged. |
| Is there anything you would like me to specifically work on with her? | The idea of friendship and understanding that other people have feelings too. She has a hard time recognizing that her actions have consequences. |

**Interview with Teacher (Artifact 4)**

**Annotations and Connection to Other Artifacts**

My interview with Sarabi was amazing because I got a feel for how she worked with Nala and how Nala performed academically. She verified her advanced linguistic abilities and the fact that Nala just has a hard time being engaged. She explained that she was thinking about a few students to pair me with and then after meeting me, she felt like Nala would get the most out of it. I appreciated her really taking the time to choose a student she felt I would not only work with the best, but who would also get the most out of what I wanted to accomplish. I think she chose the perfect student for me. Nala taught me probably just as much as I was trying to teach her. Sarabi knew Nala enough to give me good tips about working with her. I noticed that she knew a lot about what Nala has already told me which helped me to focus my lessons on what we both felt Nala would benefit best from.

**Interview with School Counselor (Artifact 5)**

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| Question | Answer |
| How long have you known Nala as a student? | Since September when school started. I try to get to know each new student to help them feel welcome. |
| Her teacher, Sarabi, mentioned meeting her in Kindergarten Clinic. Did you meet her then as well? | Yes, I am actually in charge of organizing and running the clinic. During the clinic I worked with Nala to assess some of her reasoning skills. |
| Did you find anything interesting from her test? | Nala is very bright. She got some answers correct that her peers did not. Even the tricky questions like how many wheels does a wheel barrel have. |
| Do you think she would be a good student to observe and work with? | Yes, she is a student who is unpredictable when it comes to her academic work, but she is extremely friendly. |
| Does she ever seem to struggle in certain subject areas or excel in any? | Does friendship count as a subject area? Nala is not very good socially. She is used to being in charge so having to listen to her teacher has proven to be a challenge. In the classroom though, she excels at vocabulary. |
| Do you think she finds school boring and that is why she has a hard time in academics at times? | I think she just has trouble being engaged. When she comes to my office, she can talk my ear off for half an hour or we can play a game no problem. If it’s not something Nala wants to do though, she won’t do it. |
| How do you think she learns best? | She loves being hands on with things and telling stories. Games seem to work best with keeping her engaged. |
| How does she speak or write in comparison to her peers? | She is pretty advanced for her age when it comes to communicating with others. Her vocabulary is exceptional for a kindergartner. |
| Would you consider Nala a stronger reader? | Yes, she is a wonderful reader. |
| Are there any important aspects about how she leans that would be helpful when creating activities? | Make sure you incorporate some sort of activity or game to really drive home the message you want her to receive from the lesson. Otherwise, she will just be bored. |
| Sarabi mentioned maybe working on friendship with her and learning more pro-social behaviors. Do you agree with this? | Absolutely! Nala really needs to learn to respect and listen to others, especially if their ideas are different from hers. A lesson on friendship would be perfect for her. |

**Interview with School Counselor (Artifact 5)**

**Annotations and Connection to Other Artifacts**

I did my second interview with the School Counselor, Rafiki, because she got to see and work with Nala in a different way. While the information was similar to that of Nala’s teacher, Rafiki was able to give me further insight. It is always a good idea to get more than one opinion because if not, you run the risk of creating misconceptions about the individual you are going to be working with. She helped to stress that Nala needs to be hands-on or she tends to act out. She also verified Nala’s advanced level and her need for social acceptance among her peers. She had shown a different light on the issue though by expressing Nala’s need for individualized attention. Sometimes when a child acts out in the classroom, they are labeled as a problem child right away. It was nice to see that Rafiki just found her misunderstood and in need of some guidance. I found out that Rafiki also thought of numerous students she could see me working with. The development me helped me cater my lessons to a group of individuals. I found out that small groups really helped Nala both focus and fulfill her need for attention.

**Big Question:** What does it mean to be a good friend and how can we practice being one?

**Lesson:** Let’s Put on Our Listening Ears

**Materials:** Folders / Markers / Stickers

Star Cutouts

Question Game

**Objectives:**

* The students will create their own folders using markers and stickers in order to create something to hold their work in.
* The students will brainstorm what it means to be a good listener and discuss their ideas with the group.
* The students will take turns asking and answering questions in order to display their knowledge of being a good listener.
* The students will use the star cutout in order to write one good comment about another member of the group.

**Activities:**

* Introduce myself and Nala to the other members within the group.
* Have each member begin to create their own folders using the materials provided. Engage them in normal discussion during this time.
* Brainstorm what it means to be a good listener and discuss.
* Play the question game and allow the students to take turns both asking and answering the questions.
* Have each student pick a name out of a bin and create a ‘positive remark’ star for that member of the group.
* Pose the Big Question and discuss with the students. Give a brief overview of the activities of the next lesson.

**Assessments:**

* Listen to what the students are saying during discussions. Let them just talk in order to evaluate how well they do listening to one another and not interrupting on their own.
* Observe how the students take turns during the game. If they get off track, redirect them and remind them of their brainstorming list of being a good listener.
* Listen as the students give their thoughts about the Big Question and evaluate how their responses are similar and different.

**Big Question:** What does it mean to be a good friend and how can we practice being one?

**Lesson:** Importance of Expressing Emotions

**Materials:** *Grumpy Gloria* By Anna Dewdney

Grumpy Bear Cutouts / Markers

**Objectives:**

* The students will take turns reading *Grumpy Gloria* aloud.
* With the use of the book, the students will go through and name the different ways in which others tried to cheer up Gloria.
* The student will use their ‘Grumpy Bear’ cutout to illustrate how they feel when they get angry and explain their illustration in words.

**Activities:**

* Read *Grumpy Gloria* aloud
* Go through the book, find examples of ways to cheer someone up, discuss
* Draw their emotion on ‘Grumpy Bear’ and discuss
* Pose the Big Question. Discuss with the students and then ask for how the Big Question fits into the lesson for the day.

**Assessments:**

* Listen to what the students are saying during discussion. If they get off track, redirect them back to the discussion before moving on.
* Listen to the students and follow along as they read. If they are having too much difficulty reading the book, find ways to help them sound out the words.
* Observe as the students engage in their illustrations about being grumpy. If they need redirection, give them my own example.
* Listen as the students engage in discussion on the importance of emotions and how it ties into the Big Question. If they need redirection, redirect them and clear up any misconceptions before moving on.

**Big Question:** What does it mean to be a good friend and how can we practice being one?

**Lesson:** Using good manners at school?

**Materials:** *Manners at School* By Carrie Finn

‘Draw a time when you did something rude’ worksheet

**Objectives:**

* The students will take turns reading *Manners at School* aloud with each student reading an entire page.
* With the use of the book, the students will give examples of how they use good manners at school.
* The students will discuss the meaning behind using good manners and how bad manners can have different consequences.

**Activities:**

* Read *Manners at School* aloud
* Go through the book, find examples of good manners, and compare to own use of manners
* Discuss the importance of good manners and the consequences of bad manners
* Pose the Big Question and discuss what each student believes it means.
* Have the students complete their worksheets of a time when they were rude to someone else
* Discuss the worksheet with the students and ask them to consider a difference choice they could make next time

**Assessments:**

* Listen to what each student is saying during discussion. If they begin to get off track or stop paying attention, redirect them back to the discussion before moving on.
* Observe and listen as the students engage in the book. If they need redirection, go through different types of manners with them and discuss examples together.
* Observe and listen as the students complete their worksheets. If they need clarification, give them an example of my own worksheet and discuss together.

**Linguistic Analysis**

Regardless of the context, if Nala felt comfortable then she was extremely talkative. For example, in class Nala was just as talkative as she was with me one on one. Nala would also give more of an explanation when she was able to talk about things that were fun for her. When I asked her about soccer or baseball, she would give me an elaborate explanation. When I would ask her about the books she read, she would give me short answers. This helped me learn to incorporate things she is passionate about into learning to make her excited. This also showed me her vast vocabulary for being a kindergartner. Nala can formulate sentences better than most of the children in her class. Her ability to sound out words in order to spell them also surprised me. She told me that she is louder at home because at school she gets in trouble if she acts out too much. This showed me that she knows what is expected of her at school even if she does not always perform that way. At home, Nala has many liberties such as playing outside and being less reserved. After reviewing her work and discussing it with Sarabi, it became obvious that engaging Nala is the key for her succeeding in the classroom. She acknowledges Sarabi as an authority figure, but continues to give her a hard time some days.

**Reading Analysis**

In Sarabi’s classroom, the children are given many choices and opportunities to express themselves. The children are given many incentives to not only read, but to engage in the reading process. From accelerate reader to the reading chart; the students are able to track their progress in order to be proud of themselves for their accomplishments. For reading with a partner, students must sit EEKK style (elbow, elbow, knee, knee). This enables the students to partner read properly. Nala knew about his method and how to effectively engage in the method which made me confident that Sarabi has implemented effective reading strategies that the students will be able to carry with them. Nala also knew how to recognize when a book was too advanced for her reading level. If she was unable to read a page, she was to choose a different book because it was too advanced. This showed that problem solving is promoted and a sense of choice is given to the students for what they want to read. Although Nala had a great vocabulary, she had a hard time with new words. During my lessons, we would go over any words that she found new or confusing. This helped to build her knowledge and vocabulary even more. She was even able to give me synonyms for the new words once she found out the meaning. It was fun to see the connections she was making at such a young age to her prior knowledge. If she could only get more engaged in the reading process then she would see what a journey books can take her on.

**Literacy Analysis**

Nala does not seem to have many experiences with reading other than her experiences at school. Her parents tend to not read with her at home, even though she proves to be a fabulous reader. Nala is able to read when it is of interest to her, but without her parents cultivating literacy in her, she is more likely to choose other things over reading. Nala’s interests of soccer and baseball result in her writing and talking primarily about these topics. A way to motivate her to speak, write, and read is to allow her to focus on these topics. Although it is not idea to focus on specific things all the time, it is one way to get Nala engaged and initially interested. It also can be used as a bridge to similar topics to try and get Nala to expand her reading. In order for students to use reading for learning, they need to be interested in it. I tried to create lessons that incorporated literature with the activities in order to get Nala involved in the reading process while being hands-on in a game. I wanted to tailor my teaching so she would learn as much as possible.